

## Message Text

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TAGS: PFOR MARR IN US

SUBJECT: PRESS COVERAGE ON DIEGO GARCIA

REF: NEW DELHI 12316

BEGIN SUMMARY: FOLLOW-UP STORIES ON DIEGO GARCIA DURING SEPTEMBER 11-19 WERE FEW AND BRIEF. THEY WERE MOSTLY DISPLAYED IN NON-PROMINENT PLACES IN INSIDE PAGES. COMMENT WAS LIMITED AND CRITICAL OF BOTH BRITAIN AND THE US WRITERS PLEADED THAT WASHINGTON MUST HELP RESETTLE DIEGO GARCIA. END SUMMARY.

1. LIMITED REPORTAGE ON THE DIEGO GARCIA DEVELOPMENTS HIGHLIGHTED FOUR TOPICS: (1) SENATOR KENNEDY'S STATEMENT ASKING CONGRESS TO REOPEN THE "ENTIRE ISSUE OF THE AMERICAN BASES IN DIEGO GARCIA." (2) BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE DENIAL OF EVICTING DIEGO GARCIA TO MAKE WAY FOR AN "AMERICAN ISLAND" AND ITS ASSERTION THAT IT PAID MAURITIUS GOVERNMENT FOR TWO YEARS FOR RELIEF AND RESETTLEMENT. (3) SENATORS DEMAND TO THE ADMINISTRATION FOR "A DETAILED REPORT" ON THE HISTORY OF ALL US AGREEMENTS AND COMMITMENTS REGARDING DIEGO GARCIA. (4) AFP REPORT THAT DIEGO GARCIA ARE LIVING BELOW "POVERTY LINE."

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2. B K TIWARI, IN LONDON FOR THE INDIAN EXPRESS, QUOTED

"DIPLOMATIC SOURCES" SAYING THAT "IT MAY NOW BECOME DIFFICULT FOR WASHINGTON TO HAVE DIEGO GARCIA THE WAY IT WOULD HAVE LIKED TO BE." EARLIER IN HIS DISPATCH, HE STRESSED THAT MAURITIUS IS "HAVING SECOND THOUGHTS" AND IS "PLANNING TO USE DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS TO PERSUADE THE U.S. TO ABANDON ITS PLANS." HE ALSO REPORTED THAT PRIME MINISTER RAMGOOLAM "WOULD SOON BE IN TOUCH WITH THE INDIAN OCEAN NATIONS TO FIND OUT THEIR VIEWS ON THE AMERICAN DECISION TO BUILD A BASE" IN DIEGO GARCIA. ANOTHER LONDON-BASED CORRESPONDENT, V R BHATT, ALLEGED IN THE HINDUSTAN TIMES THAT THE EVACUEE FAMILIES "HAVE NOT RECEIVED ANY COMPENSATION" AND THAT THEY WERE EVACUATED "WITH MINIMUM PUBLICITY." THE HINDU'S MAN IN LONDON, BATUK GATHANI, WROTE THAT BOTH WHITEHALL AND STATE DEPARTMENT ARE "DEEPLY EMBARRASSED" ABOUT THE FORCED EVICTION OF DIEGO GARCIA.

3. LIMITED EDITORIAL REACTION WAS VERY CRITICAL OF BOTH BRITAIN AND THE US, CALLING IT A "SORDID AFFAIR." THE TIMES OF INDIA WAS TYPICAL: "FURTHER DISCLOSURES ABOUT THE GOINGS-ON IN DIEGO GARCIA...SHOW THAT THE BRITISH AND AMERICAN GOVERNMENTS HAVE BEEN GUILTY OF NOT MERELY DISSIMULATION BUT DOWNRIGHT CHICANERY."

4. OBSERVERS UNIFORMLY URGED WASHINGTON TO HELP RESETTLE DIEGO GARCIA. THE TIMES OF INDIA JUDGED THAT THE "CROWNING IRONY" OF THE SITUATION IS THAT NEITHER BRITAIN NOR THE US "IS PREPARED TO ACCEPT THE MORAL AND FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF RESETTLING A MERE THOUSAND VICTIMS OF THEIR POLICIES." THE INDIAN EXPRESS EDITORIALIZED: "IT SEEMS STRANGE THAT THE RICHEST COUNTRY IN THE WORLD SHOULD GRUDGE THE VICTIMS THE MEANS OF SUBSISTENCE AFTER...FORCING THEM OUT OF THEIR HOMES." SCHNEIDER

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